



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY  
CIVIL WORKS  
108 ARMY PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON DC 20310-0108

DEC 16 2010

Honorable John Garamendi  
United States House of Representatives  
Rayburn House Office Building, Room 2459  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Garamendi:

I am responding to your December 6, 2010 letter, co-signed with 16 other Representatives, expressing concerns about the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) levee vegetation policy and its application in your congressional district. I am sending an identical letter to each of the co-signers.

The Corps has had vegetation management standards for new and existing levees, floodwalls and dams for several decades. Supplemental to these standards, the Corps has a process to review requests from non-federal sponsors to allow non-compliant vegetation to remain on levees if it is determined that the vegetation does not jeopardize levee integrity. This review process is currently being revised to incorporate updated Corps-wide principles. The purposes of this process are to ensure that public safety is not compromised; that there is a well defined vegetation management plan in place; and that all environmental compliance requirements have been met. There is a misperception that the Corps vegetation policy requires removal of all trees and shrubs from federally authorized levees. When this vegetation variance process was recently applied to the Natomas levee, it resulted in hundreds of trees being allowed to permanently remain along the levee.

Since 2008, the Corps has been fully engaged with the State of California in the California Levee Roundtable, a collaborative partnership of federal, state, and local officials to address the issues you identify in your letter. This partnership has resulted in the February 2009 California Central Valley Flood System Improvement Framework (Framework), which has become a national model for addressing system-wide levee improvements. The Framework will be the bridging document that establishes interim processes and milestones until the completion of the Central Valley Flood Protection Plan (CVFPP) in July 2012. It is imperative that close collaboration continue to occur among the federal, state, and local agencies as the CVFPP is developed since this plan will define implementation of the needed flood risk reduction work without compromising public safety or California's valuable natural resources.

I fully recognize the water resources challenges within the State of California and that a long-term solution will require an extensive collaborative effort at the federal,

state, and local level. I am committed to this effort and look forward to the continued partnership. Thank you for your interest in the Army Civil Works program.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jo-Ellen Darcy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "E".

Jo-Ellen Darcy  
Assistant Secretary of the Army  
(Civil Works)